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ABSTRACT

A new approach to elementary school physical education is called "movement education." Movement education uses problem-solving, guided-discovery, and exploratory methods, with the effect of individualizing learning in physical education. The concepts involved in movement education include body awareness and skills, the space in which the body moves, the effort or quality of body movement, and the relationships among body parts, individuals, groups, and objects. Movement education can also be based on movement purposes, such as physiological efficiency and psychic equilibrium. Movement education is advocated for 10 reasons, including its basing of skill development on the learner's natural movements, its allowance for learners to make decisions and be successful, the opportunities for self-direction, the reduced likelihood of injury, and its enhancement of students' ability to learn on their own. Movement education is characterized by informal use of space, equipment variety, dissimilar responses among students, small game situations based on student decision-making, and self-directed activities. As with other innovations, the implications for administrators include leadership, inservice education, communication about the program to parents and the community, suitable space and equipment, and opportunities for joint planning among physical education and classroom teachers. (RW)

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MOVEMENT EDUCATION:

AN INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH TO PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Sally J. Bratt

In recent years physical education in the elementary school has been taking on a new look. The change has been slow and oftentimes it has affected only a portion of the total physical education program, as many practitioners and supervisors endeavor to implement the current thought and practices of the new approach. This new approach to teaching physical education is commonly referred to as movement education. Movement education represents a change from traditional practices in physical education in terms of methodology, curriculum content and structure, and structure of the physical environment for learning.

What Is Movement Education?

Movement education is an approach to teaching physical education that is consistent with the natural characteristics of learners, consistent with accepted principles of learning, and consistent with the democratic philosophy of life.

Open-ended and discovery methods of teaching are employed to improve the performance of human movement skills and to increase knowledge about the principles that govern purposeful movement.

Movement education provides opportunities for student decision making by utilizing predominantly problem-solving, guided-discovery, and exploratory methods of teaching. These methods have the effect of individualizing learning, as students have choices, within limits, in formulating their responses in learning experiences. In physical education this means that students are able to respond within their physical capabilities and at their level of skill, and because of the nature of learners, they tend to respond in a way that is challenging to them. There also are opportunities for learners to respond according to their interests and past experiences.

What Is the Content of Movement Education?

The content of movement education is movement. However, the movement content is structured differently than into such traditional activities as basketball, folk dance, and tumbling. The content is classified according to movement concepts that pervade all physical activity. Those movement concepts are identified by Logsdon and Barrett (1969) and Stanley (1977) and are outlined here.

Movement Education Concepts

I. Body (What the Body Does)

A. Body Awareness

1. Whole body functions (curl, stretch, twist)

2. Body parts (body supports, body leads, actions, shapes)

B. Skills

1. Locomotor (walk, run, jump, hop, skip, gallop, slide, roll)

2. Nonlocomotor (stretch, curl, twist)

3. Manipulative (throw, catch, strike, carry, lift)

II. Space (Where the Body Moves)

A. Recognition (personal space, general space)

B. Direction (forward, backward, upward, downward, sideward, diagonal)

C. Level (high, medium, low)

D. Pathway (straight, curved)

III. Effort or Quality (How the Body Moves)

A. Time (quick, slow)

B. Force (strong, light)

C. Space (direct, indirect)

D. Flow (stoppable, on-going)

IV. Relationships

A. Body Parts

B. Individuals and Groups to Each Other

C. Individuals and Groups to Objects

An important area of content is kinesthetic awareness. This concerns the development of awareness of body position and change of position and is considered basic to movement learning. Current thinking focuses on the development of process as well as product skills. These process skills include refining movement skills; varying the time, force, and spatial aspects of movements; adapting movement to stationary and moving objects and people; linking movements in sequences; combining basic movement skills into more complex movement skills; improvising; and composing or arranging movements in ways unique to the individual to achieve an objective. Units of instruction in movement education might focus on refining ball handling skills, or improving the concept of balance through balance activities, or adapting movement to relate to stationary objects.

Another way to organize the physical education curriculum is to cluster experiences around purposes for human movement. Jewett and Mullan (1977) identified seven key purpose concepts with twenty-two sub-concepts. One such key purpose concept was physiological efficiency. Learning experiences might be clustered about one of its sub-concepts of mechanical efficiency. In such a unit students would learn principles governing human movement and apply those principles to a variety

of skill areas. Another key purpose concept was psychic equilibrium. Examples of sub-concepts in this category are joy of movement and self-knowledge. Learning experiences could be clustered around each of these to constitute a unit of instruction. The other major key purpose concepts were spatial orientation, object manipulation, communication through movement, group interaction, and cultural involvement. A curriculum structure based on the Key Purpose Concept framework would be appropriate for all grade levels.

Why Is Movement Education Advocated?

The following reasons are offered to support the implementation of a movement education approach to physical education.

1. Movement education bases skill development on the natural movements of the learner. This minimizes learner frustration by eliminating the necessity to mimic complex skills which may or may not be within the learner's capability to perform.
2. Through the use of open-ended and discovery methods learners are able to make choices and be successful. This enhances motivation.
3. The use of open-ended and discovery methods has the tendency to nurture the learner's natural curiosity, not stifle it.

4. Methods that involve the students in decision making provide them with opportunities to be self-directive. Such self-directed experiences are essential in preparing students to be members of a democratic society.
5. When students acquire knowledge of the principles governing human movement and develop awareness of body position and change of position, it increases their capability to improve their movement skills on their own initiative.
6. There is less likelihood of injury when students are allowed to respond within their physical capabilities and at their skill level.
7. Safety training in the mechanics and understanding of controlling force in a variety of situations is part of the movement education content. This contributes to a sense and a condition of well-being for students.
8. Such relationships among individuals as cooperation, leadership, and followership are treated as content and not left to chance.
9. By learning the process skills of refining, varying, adapting, linking, combining, improvising, and composing, students are equipped to carry on meaningful movement learning on their own.

10. The content and method of movement education contribute toward developing a positive attitude toward physical activity, which is essential for the individual's continued well-being outside of and beyond the school experience.

What Are the Characteristics of a Movement Education Program?

Movement education classes are characterized by an informal use of space--there are no lines, nor squads, nor rows, nor columns, nor any intricate, formal arrangements of students in space. Students are involved in continuous work on a movement problem individually or in cooperation with others. Several student performances are used to illustrate a concept, rather than the teacher demonstrating a skill for students to imitate. Students are using their own space or sharing general space without interfering with the activity of others. Equipment is available in sufficient numbers to allow one piece of small equipment per student or one piece of large equipment for every four students. There is a variety in type of equipment available, suitable for a variety of skill levels.

Students' responses to movement problems often appear different from each other--seldom are two identical. Students may be working at different steps of a progression that allows exploration and discovery at each step. There is practice occurring on basic movement skills and practice in varying

time, force, and space elements of movement. There is practice on linking and combining movement skills.

There are small game situations--two on two, three on three, or four on four. Here students share in decision making in one or more of the following areas: the number of players, the number and type of equipment to be used, the size and shape of the playing area, the skills to be used, and game strategies. They may be making decisions about the objective of the game or about the conditions of play. These small game situations provide maximum opportunity for students to use the skills required in the game in a guided situation, which is quite different in terms of the opportunities to learn from participating in a regulation game that is carried on with nine, ten, or eleven players per side.

Students are involved in self-directed activities. Students are experiencing success at their particular skill level. There are opportunities to use skills in a creative manner. Progressions move from exploration and individual skill work to cooperative partner work, and then on to cooperative and competitive work in small group situations. Competition is not highlighted by scorekeeping, but there is attention to having students utilizing skills efficiently and effectively. Strategy emerges with the guidance of teacher questioning in the small group situations. Students show games they have

invented to classmates who are engaged in guided observation. Students write up descriptions of their invented games, thus expanding their concept of "game." Teachers are working informally with individuals and groups using solicitation, clarification, guidance, confirmation, response, acceptance, and observation behaviors.

What Are the Implications for Administrators?

It is the responsibility of administrators to help physical educators improve programs by providing instructional leadership and facilitating instruction. The needs in the area of physical education are not unlike those in other curriculum areas.

The development of quality physical education programs is dependent upon:

- leadership in curriculum development
- on-going and goal-oriented inservice education
- establishment of mechanisms for interacting with other physical educators, classroom teachers, special staff, and experts in the field
- opportunities and resources to communicate the program to faculty, parents, and the community
- suitable space and suitable and sufficient learning materials
- a physical education resource center
- a class size appropriate for individualized movement learning
- an opportunity to make physical education an integral part of the school curriculum through joint planning with teachers

with teachers in other curriculum areas.

Staffing physical education positions at all levels with professionals who are willing to make a commitment to providing a program in which all students have the opportunity to acquire movement skills and knowledge for lifetime learning is essential.

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